

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 2218

EXDIS

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TAGS: PGOV SHUM NU VE
SUBJ: PRESIDENT PEREZ COMMENTS AGAIN ON NICARAGUA

1. IN A MEETING WITH ME ON ANOTHER SUBJECT THE EVENING OF MARCH 6 PRESIDENT PEREZ BROUGHT UP NICARAGUA AND AGAIN REPEATED ENERGETICALLY HIS BASIC ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION. BECAUSE THIS IS A FURTHER INDICATION OF HIS THINKING ON THE MATTER AND OF THE THOUGHTS HE IS LIKELY TO BROACH TO PRESIDENT CARTER, I DESCRIBE HIS VIEWS BELOW IN HIS TERMS:

2. PEREZ SAID THE SITUATION IN NICARAGUA IS WORSE. THE PRESSURE AGAINST SOMOZA WILL JUST CONTINUE. IT WAS LIKE THE MOVE AGAINST PEREZ JIMENEZ. ONCE THE PROTESTS STARTED, THE PROCESS WAS INEXORABLE. THE ONLY QUESTION WAS WHEN AND IN WHAT WAY PJ WOULD BE THROWN OUT. THIS IS NOW TRUE IN NICARAGUA. THE NICARAGUAN PEOPLE, PEREZ SAID, HAD LOST THEIR FEAR OF SOMOZA AND WERE PREPARED TO CHALLENGE HIS POWER.

3. THE PROBLEM, PEREZ WENT ON, WAS THAT THE LONGER SOME MODERATE, "ELEGANT" SOLUTION WAS DELAYED, THE GREATER THE CHANCE FOR POLARIZATION AND VIOLENCE. AND IF VIOLENCE IS FINALLY LEFT AS THE ONLY TOOL, THOSE WHO USE IT--AND HE SAID HE MEANT THE SANDINISTAS--WILL INSTALL AN EXTREME
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LEFT REGIME; THAT WILL PRESENT A REAL PROBLEM TO THE US, WHICH MAY FIND IT NECESSARY TO TAKE MEASURES IN RESPONSE, AND THAT, HE SAID, WOULD BE A REAL CRISIS.

4. PEREZ SAID THAT MATTERS COULD NOT BE DELAYED MUCH LONGER IF VIOLENCE AND RADICAL SOLUTIONS WERE TO BE AVOIDED. HE BELIEVED, HE SAID, THAT PRESSURE SHOULD

BE BROUGHT UPON SOMOZA TO LEAVE VERY SOON IN SOME FACE-SAVING WAY. ONE COULD NOT WAIT UNTIL 1981. PEREZ SAID A JUNTA COULD BE FORMED TO RECEIVE POWER FROM SOMOZA AND OVERSEE A TRANSITION, JUST AS THE LARAZABAL JUNTA DID WITH PEREZ JIMENIZ' OVERTHROW. PEREZ SAID THAT IN FACT THE PEREZ JIMENEZ EPISODE IN 1958 PROVIDED A NUMBER OF INTERESTING AND RELEVANT "LESSONS." PEREZ SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THAT THERE WERE RETIRED NATIONAL GUARD OFFICERS WITH PRESITGE WHO MIGHT HEAD UP A JUNTA TO WHICH THE GUARD COULD ADHERE, A LA LARAZABAL AND THE VENEZUELAN MILITARY IN 1958. HE ENDED BY SAYING THE SITUATION WAS SERIOUS AND ALL OF CENTRAL AMERICA'S FUTURE WAS INVOLVED.

5. COMMENT: TO ALL OF THE FOREGOING I JUST LISTENED; I MADE NO COMMENT OTHER THAN TO SAY THAT I WAS SURE PRESIDENT CARTER WOULD WANT TO HEAR HIS VIEWS.
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